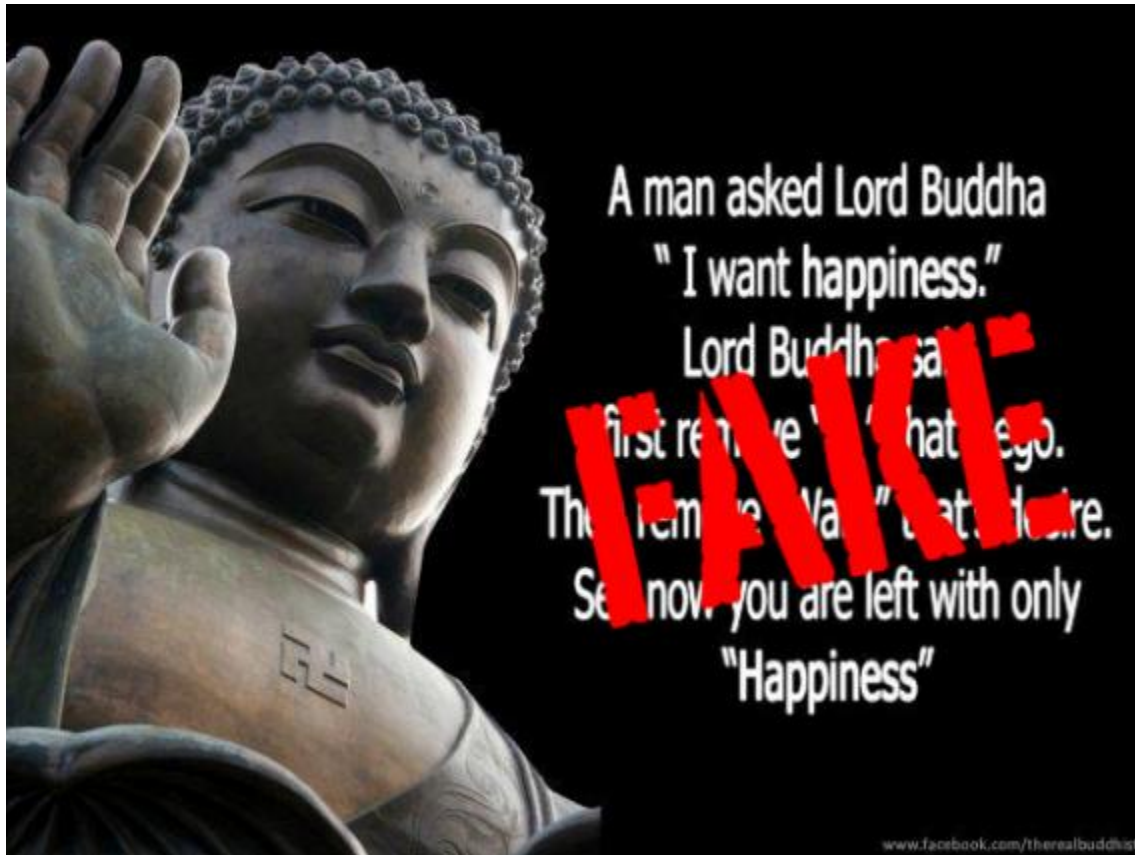


A man said to the Buddha, ‘I want Happiness.’

<https://fakebuddhaquotes.com/a-man-said-to-the-buddha-i-want-happiness/>



A man said to the Buddha, “I want Happiness.”
Buddha said, first remove “I”, that’s ego,
then remove “want”, that’s desire.
See now you are left with only Happiness.

I only recently started seeing this one doing the rounds, and at first I ignored it, because it was so obviously fake that I didn’t think anyone would take it seriously, any more than they would think that the Dalai Lama really had gone to a hot dog vendor and asked him to make him one with everything.

And yet, it seems some people really do think that this play on words really is a conversation from some Buddhist scripture. It ain’t.

For a start, this joke wouldn’t even work in Pāli because its conjugation of verbs is rather different from English. So for example, hoti is the Pāli verb to be. While in English we indicate

the first person use of this verb by adding a personal pronoun, forming “I am,” in Pāli it’s the ending of the verb that changes. To say “I am” the verb hoti becomes “homi.”

So there’s no separate word for “I” that we can remove from whatever verb would represent “want” (it might be the verb kāmēti, to desire). We’d have to remove “I” and “want” at the same time, since they’re inseparable. And maybe that’s a more Buddhist teaching, since in Buddhism the problem with our sense of personal identity is that we cling to it. The Buddha didn’t eradicate references to himself from his speech, but he made it clear that there was nothing that he clung to as part of his sense of self. We get rid of the problem of the self by ceasing to cling to the self. The clinging and the clinging to self vanish simultaneously.

I’ve no idea where this quote originated. I’m assuming that someone was making a little Buddhist-themed joke rather than trying to claim that this is actually a canonical quote, but I haven’t, so far, managed to find a source. Or at least not an original one.

Anyway, it would be silly for me to take this little pun too seriously. I only decided to write it up because so many people have been concerned about people who seem to think it might be a genuine scriptural quote. If you’re one of those people, I have the address of the Dalai Lama’s hot dog vendor, if you’re interested. But be warned, you have to have the exact money, because he can’t issue change. Change, after all, comes from within.

Posted on [August 16, 2012](#) Author [Bodhipaksa](#) Categories [Fake Buddha Stories](#)

44 thoughts on “A man said to the Buddha, ‘I want Happiness.’”

1.  **ali** says:

[February 1, 2016 at 8:10 pm](#)

It doesn’t matter if the quote is fake or not, it doesn’t matter if Budha really give that speech. You just need to take the essence.

[Reply](#)

1.  **Bodhipaksa** says:

[February 8, 2016 at 12:38 pm](#)

As Einstein said, “Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted in important affairs.” So, yes, it does matter.

[Reply](#)

1.



Joseph says:

[May 1, 2016 at 2:36 pm](#)

Good on ya! Thanks for this.

[Reply](#)

2.



Bodhipaksa says:

[January 19, 2017 at 8:23 pm](#)

Of course. I work on that every day. But remember to take your own advice. An aversion to the concept of accurate citations is also a form of ego.

[Reply](#)

2.



J.C. Huiszoon says:

[May 25, 2019 at 4:49 pm](#)

curious about how much of your time it took to write this and figure out... □

[Reply](#)

2.



andrea says:

[March 29, 2016 at 8:57 am](#)

“In matters of truth and justice, there is no difference between large and small problems, for issues concerning the treatment of people are all the same. Anyone who doesn’t take truth seriously in small matters cannot be trusted in large ones either.

The full quote is slightly different and in context sends an entirely different message.

And just because Einstein said it, does that make it truthful.

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[March 29, 2016 at 3:49 pm](#)

You're absolutely correct that something is not necessarily true just because Einstein said it. I didn't, however, make that claim.

In this particular case I think he's entirely correct: being casual with the truth — in effect saying “it doesn't matter if this information is bullshit, I'm going to pass it on anyway” — is something that matters, if you take the truth seriously.

I'm afraid I also don't see how the extra sentence “sends an entirely different message.” The message is the same in both instances: if you take truth seriously, then “small matters” matter.

Your version of the quote, incidentally, is different from the version in the Einstein Archives, which is as follows: “In matters concerning truth and justice there can be no distinctions between big problems and small, for the general principles which determine the conduct of men are indivisible. Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted in important affairs.”

[Reply](#)



2. **Ronan** says:

[August 29, 2017 at 4:30 am](#)

The quote from Einstein is a translation of the original german, which was as follows :

Wenn es sich um Wahrheit und Gerechtigkeit handelt, gibt es nicht die Unterscheidung zwischen kleinen und grossen Problemen. Denn die allgemeinen Gesichtspunkte, die das Handeln der Menschen betreffen, sind unteilbar. Wer es in kleinen Dingen mit der Wahrheit nicht ernst nimmt, dem kann man auch in grossen Dingen nicht vertrauen...

Regardless of what the official Einstein archives say, I find your translation accurate. I got the german from quoteinvestigator

[\(https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/04/15/large-truth/\)](https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/04/15/large-truth/)

However, I don't agree that your translation sends an "entirely different message". I am struck by the description of satan as "the father of lies". I have come to believe that every wrongdoing starts with a lie to yourself. A person who has developed the habit of "carelessness with the truth" (lying, let's face it) has the ability to lie to themselves. This can easily come into play in their behaviour in "great matters".

Actually, what is a great matter? How do we know anything is more important than anything else? Often not, alas, until it is too late!

Thank you all for the thoughtful discussion

()

[Reply](#)



3. **Juan** says:

[April 5, 2016 at 2:29 am](#)

The quote is right no matter whether it was said by Buddha or not. Ego and desire indeed a important cause of suffering. Besides why be a Buddhist or a christian when you can be a freethinker? Ideals(truth, love, forgiveness, etc.) matter not ideologies.

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[April 7, 2016 at 8:54 am](#)

Ah, but I've never made the claim that a quote's truth depends on who said it. All I'm doing here is clarifying whether quotes are scriptural or not.

I've never thought that being a Buddhist means you have to adopt an ideology. What did you have in mind when you wrote that, Juan?

[Reply](#)



4. **sushil** says:

[May 27, 2016 at 4:25 pm](#)

It is the absolute truth. Ego and desire are the two greatest sources of misery and unhappiness. It is the substance and the content and the truth in the quote which really matters, so we should not be bickering about the source or the authenticity. First let us seek the truth, and then we shall really 'see'. Sincerely seek the truth, and it shall set you free.

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[May 27, 2016 at 6:15 pm](#)

The contents of a quote surely matter. But so does misrepresenting a quote's origins. I'd like to assume that the concept of accurate citations is not somehow a problem for you.

[Reply](#)



1. **sushil** says:

[May 30, 2016 at 2:34 am](#)

No, it doesn't matter where the quote came from, as long as it is the absolute truth. And our intuitions and experience will confirm, whether a quote is absolutely true or not, and that is all that matters. We should stop quibbling over insignificant trifles, and only seek the truth, regardless of the source.

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[May 30, 2016 at 9:13 am](#)

No one's suggesting "quibbling," Sushil. I'm simply suggesting that people don't pass on false information (or untruth) regarding the origin of quotes.

I find it strange, though, that you want to “seek the truth” and yet at the same time seem to regard the truth of the attribution of a quote to be insignificant. As Einstein said, “Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted in important affairs.”

[Reply](#)

2.



Dominik says:

[August 3, 2018 at 5:21 am](#)

I think your discussion partners are unable to understand the difference of a misquotation and truthfulness of a locution. Most of them are even unable to discuss that said locution’s truthfulness. They just accept it as truthful since it harmonizes with their morals. I would talk with such morons.

[Reply](#)

1.



Bodhipaksa says:

[August 7, 2018 at 8:16 am](#)

Yes, the question of a quote’s authenticity and its truthfulness or usefulness are entirely separate, and yet many people are unable to recognize it. I guess it’s a question of people’s emotions being provoked and their capacity for clear thinking consequently being diminished.

[Reply](#)

5.



Kim Sylvest says:

[May 29, 2016 at 8:16 am](#)

I like the “quote”! It is very Buddhist even though there is no record of Sakyamuni actually saying those exact words. I’d like to see more loving kindness in these discussions.

[Reply](#)



6. **Otto Karl** says:

[June 3, 2016 at 10:21 am](#)

I didn't like your condescending tone. It wasn't so obviously fake that this very new student of Buddhist teachings wouldn't take it seriously. The sentiment made sense and as a new learner I didn't yet know that looking at such a pun, seriously, would require being silly.

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[June 3, 2016 at 11:45 am](#)

When I said "it would be silly to take this little pun too seriously" I meant it would be silly for *me* to take it too seriously, and to spend too much time on debunking it.

I mean no insult to anyone who is new to Buddhism or unfamiliar with its teachings, since they've little or no basis for knowing what is and what isn't likely to be genuine, although I'd hope that some people at least would recognize that this kind of word-play is very unlikely to work in a foreign language.

[Reply](#)



2. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[June 3, 2016 at 1:28 pm](#)

I've clarified that in the article. Thanks for bringing this ambiguity to my attention!

[Reply](#)



1. **Otto Karl** says:

[June 3, 2016 at 8:59 pm](#)

Thank you Bodhipaksa. I suspect my own insecurities were at play because I would normally be slower to presume things were inflection isn't possible. Thank you for the clarification.

I see what you mean about language. My favorite Socrates' quote is stated more than one way for the same reason.

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[June 4, 2016 at 8:16 am](#)

Not a problem, Otto.

[Reply](#)



7. **'Kankucho Bird'** says:

[June 20, 2016 at 9:28 am](#)

Another problem is that, if the disciple in question removes 'I', as instructed, then there is no 'you' (or 'him') available to be left with happiness.

Big thumb up for your useful blog, Bodhipaksa. You might like to know that the version of this non-quote which google-led me here was attributed to Richard Gere. It might be fun to compile a top-10 chart of the spontaneously guessed gurus of Heard-It-Someplace-Or-Other Buddhism. □

Keep up the good work, sir!

[Reply](#)



8. **Chris Valade** says:

[October 17, 2016 at 12:29 am](#)

I'm a bit confused about why so many don't understand the issue with not mis-attributing quotes. It doesn't matter if it is something the person would agree with, the point is that ... um ... he *didn't* say it. Instead of being dishonest and attributing the quote to the Buddha (or whoever), look up the source, or just leave it without a source, not that hard!

Why does this matter? If you follow the 'logic' of 'it's fine if it's right' or 'agrees with what they would've said' then why not write an entire book and publish it with "The Buddha" as the author? When we quote someone, it indicates that these are their exact words. When you comment on what someone said, it's your own words and interpretation, so if we are to start making up quotes and putting them in the Buddha's mouth, who's to determine what the Buddha would and wouldn't have agreed with? How about we use quotes for quoting the actual words, thus letting the person speak for themselves.

Finally, I believe the quote is a misrepresentation of the Buddha's teachings in being overly simplistic, and thus in missing the importance of practicing the path and developing insight.

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[October 17, 2016 at 6:37 am](#)

Well put.

[Reply](#)



9. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[August 25, 2017 at 5:56 pm](#)

So you have a problem with the concept of accurate citations?

[Reply](#)



10. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[February 20, 2018 at 5:26 pm](#)

If you don't like my responses, you probably wouldn't have liked the Buddha very much. He was apparently fond of using the term "worthless man" to refer to people who misrepresented his teaching.

Anyway, I thought I was being fairly polite, especially given the nonsense that "Ancient Wisdom" was spouting ☐

I certainly think I have an open mind. I'm open to valid evidence or logic. Unfortunately "Ancient Wisdom" offered little of either. He was also incorrect in asserting that the quote in question comes from the book, "Sayings of Buddha."

[Reply](#)



1. **Alan Watts** says:

[June 11, 2019 at 1:56 am](#)

Sod off, you "I-knew-Buddha-in-person" mate.
This quote explains IT.
Remove I, remove desire, you are left with Being aka Joyfulness.
Who cares if it's fake or not?
Idolater.
Always problems with traditioners.

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[June 11, 2019 at 9:20 am](#)

Apparently understanding "IT" hasn't brought you any peace or helped make you a kinder person. Perhaps, then, it's not "IT" that you've found?

[Reply](#)

2.  **Chris Valade** says:

[June 12, 2019 at 5:48 am](#)

Why not just share or enjoy, or whatever, the line without falsely ascribing it to the Buddha? I don't understand why the insistence on ascribing it to the Buddha. Why do you get so upset about that part? I very much want to understand, can you please explain?

[Reply](#)

1.  **Alan Watts** says:

[June 14, 2019 at 1:53 am](#)

Chris Valade, indeed mate, I could ask this fella who “walked-beside-Gautama” the same question.

Why is he so upset about what is right and what is wrong? So what? Who cares?

Bodhipraksa, relax mate. Enjoy the dance. Enjoy the play of form. I know nothing.

And I am fine with that.

[Reply](#)

1.  **Bodhipaksa** says:

[June 14, 2019 at 8:54 am](#)

Perhaps this “getting upset” that I supposedly do is happening only in your imagination, Alan? Perhaps it's the person who tells another to “sod off” who is upset?

And, as has often happened before, I'm curious why anyone should be upset by the concept of accurate citations.

2.  **Chris Valade** says:

[June 14, 2019 at 11:23 am](#)

Based on your not replying to my question the first time, I am losing hope, but one more go: why do you, 'Alan Watts,' get defensive about someone pointing out that thin quote is being falsely ascribed to the Buddha? We're not even talking about the usefulness or truth of the line itself, only the fact that the Buddha didn't say it.

Also, I'm in agreement with Bodhipaksa here—as should be abundantly clear. And I don't see why you would think he's getting upset at all, especially when you continue to hurl insults.

Your question, "Why is he so upset about what is right and what is wrong? So what? Who cares?" Is baffling, to say the least. If you don't care, why even respond at all, why even read what anyone has said, ever, even the quote in question? Beyond that, I feel that Bodhipaksa, others who have commented here, and myself have made very solid points addressing that very question any way.

Again, I am very curious to hear why you feel that pointing out that the quote is mis-ascribed is a problem? Why do you insist on saying the Buddha, or anyone, said something with not only no evidence, but evidence to the contrary?

I am interested in understanding, though I suspect I am wasting my time, and so will respond to another non-reply with mere silence. Either way, take care.



3. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[June 14, 2019 at 2:19 pm](#)

Thank you, Chris.



11. **Brad Palmer** says:

[August 8, 2019 at 4:32 pm](#)

If Buddha is One with the Universe, Enlightened, One with all there is, all Truth, if that's what it means to be Enlightened, complete transcendence of all boundaries and limitations of duality, then any 'saying', especially one as deeply meaningful as that one, can well be attributed to Buddha sans Pharisaical legalism obfuscating the deeper Truths! Truth, being Universal, can be found everywhere. It is 'easier' to find 'problems' because that is the nature of ego/thought. It takes knowing Truth is everywhere, then we can begin to find the path into finding it in the strangest places! *___-
Namaste'

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[August 8, 2019 at 5:49 pm](#)

Of all the truly silly things I've ever read, this must be close to the top of the list.

Let's leave aside the view ([mistaken](#), according to the Buddha himself) that he was "one with the universe," and simply apply the principle you've just articulated, Brad.

"I don't want to belong to any club that will accept someone like me as a member." —The Buddha.

"I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice chianti." —The Buddha.

"The Jewish race is to be exterminated." —The Buddha.

I presume you have no difficulty with these attributions?

It really dismays me the intellectual knots that people will tie themselves in to avoid accepting a fact that conflicts with their attachments.

[Reply](#)



12. **Anand** says:

[August 18, 2019 at 6:44 am](#)

Woah ! Some intellectuals here seem to be more enlightened than the Buddha himself, since they stress so much on 'Universal Truths' as if they have directly experienced these truths for themselves! Bodhipaksa, hats off to your patience in dealing with such people. Thank you for your contribution in clearing off false attributions to the Buddha. I have encountered many people who have wrongly interpreted Buddhism based on fake quotes

alone, without ever having read actual canonical scriptures.
Metta ☐

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[August 18, 2019 at 6:00 pm](#)

Thank you, Anand.

[Reply](#)



1. **Brad Palmer** says:

[August 18, 2019 at 8:07 pm](#)

If your 'criticism' is only going to be based on emotional ad-hominem (look it up) attacks, and ignorance, I can see why you eschew (look it up) 'intellectuals'. Jealousy...

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[August 19, 2019 at 4:54 am](#)

You can be better than this, Brad.

[Reply](#)



2. **Brad Palmer** says:

[August 18, 2019 at 8:08 pm](#)

Nice to have a support group, no matter how ignorant!
Good bye

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[August 19, 2019 at 4:55 am](#)

I'm curious why you're so angry. More importantly, though, are *you* curious about why you're so angry?

[Reply](#)



13. **Jon Hooke** says:

[May 10, 2020 at 2:01 pm](#)

Wouldn't you just let the quote be? It shouldn't really matter if it's false or not, but that it instills a bit of wisdom to the reader. I would think if the Buddha were around, he would only care that the reader understood the essence of his teachings, no matter if it came directly from him or falsely attributed from him. And, everything you read about Buddha is second hand accounts anyway, so who's to say that everything you've read was his true words. It seems you're EGO is steering your actions to show how knowledgeable you are in matters of Buddhism. Let things go. Let it be. You're not a designated defender of the Buddhism teachings and quotes. Always being correct about "truths" makes you closed off from the real TRUTH – Love.

[Reply](#)



1. **Bodhipaksa** says:

[May 11, 2020 at 9:36 am](#)

Hi, Jon.

Of course I'm not a designated defender of the Buddhism teachings and quotes. I'm exercising my own choice in how I want to spend my time and energy.

Of course that brings up the question, are you the designated arbiter of what matters or not? You are claiming that the impact of quotes matters but that accurate citations don't.

As it happens, I think both the meanings of quotes and whether they are correctly attributed matter. Somehow the fact that I care about something you don't distresses you. That's unfortunate, but it's not something I can help you with — you'll have to sort that out for yourself.

You seem to think you know what the Buddha would care about, and oddly enough your version of the Buddha sees things in exactly the same way you do. Unfortunately for you the Buddha as he appears in the early Buddhist texts has a very different view. He asked his followers to check carefully to make sure that words attributed to him were actually found in the scriptures. One of the few things that really seems to have bothered him is being misquoted and having words put in his mouth. Repeatedly he called those who did this “worthless” and “fools.” This might not strike you as being very loving, but I assume that this way of talking was a practice of “tough love,” designed to break through the ego of those who thought they understood him, but didn't.

All the best,
Bodhipaksa

[Reply](#)